

Department of the Interior  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office  
2730 Loker Avenue West  
Carlsbad, California 92008  
Phone: 760/431-9440  
Fax: 760/431-9624

## News Release



(SC)

02-XXX

Contact: Jack Fancher, or Jane Hendron - 760/431-9440

For Release: October 8, 2002

### **RESTORATION OF BOLSA CHICA WETLANDS MOVES FORWARD WITH COMPLETION OF ECOLOGICAL RISK ASSESSMENT**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bolsa Chica Steering Committee, announce today the availability of an Ecological Risk Assessment for the Bolsa Chica wetlands in Orange County, California.

"We have reached an important milestone in the restoration of the Bolsa Chica wetlands to a functioning estuarine system with the completion of the risk assessment," said Jack Fancher, Coastal Program Chief and Project Manager at the Service's Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office. "The ecological risk assessment lays the foundation for developing appropriate clean up options for this important coastal wetland."

Since the 1940s, much of the Bolsa Chica lowlands area has been subject to oil and gas exploration, production and processing activities. This area and adjacent sites have also been used for agriculture, cattle grazing, recreational hunting and fishing, and as a wildlife reserve. These past activities, combined with urban runoff, have introduced a variety of chemicals to the wetlands.

The ecological risk assessment identifies the types and concentrations of chemical contaminants present on the site and what chemicals may pose a risk to birds or other wildlife.

"The knowledge gained through development of the ecological risk assessment will be beneficial in developing successful clean up efforts and ensuring that the restoration will protect this precious wetland resource," said Wayne Nastri, Regional Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "Our main goal is to make sure that the restoration of the Bolsa Chica lowlands will result in the creation of quality habitat that will support birds and other wildlife for many generations."

Clean up and restoration of the Bolsa Chica lowlands is being completed under the direction of the Bolsa Chica Steering Committee, a multi-agency task force that includes the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the California State Lands Commission, California Coastal Conservancy, California Resources Agency, and the California Department of Fish and Game.

The next step in the complex restoration project at Bolsa Chica will be the initiation of additional sampling of areas of confirmed contamination. The additional sampling will help to delineate precise areas that may require clean up. The Steering Committee anticipates that delineation sampling will be completed in 2003.

Coastal wetlands in California and other states have been lost and degraded at an alarming rate. It is estimated that California alone has lost approximately 95 percent of its historical coastal wetlands. Restoration of Bolsa Chica to a fully functioning wetlands ecosystem is one step in reversing the habitat degradation of California's surviving wetlands.

Following completion of all clean up and restoration activities, the site will most likely become a Federal or State-managed wildlife refuge and will serve to mitigate for habitat losses in the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

You can learn more about the Bolsa Chica restoration project by visiting the following websites:

State Lands Commission - <http://www.slc.ca.gov>

National Marine Fisheries Service - <http://swr.ucsd.edu/hcd/bolsa.htm>

If you would like to view the entire Ecological Risk Assessment in print, the document is available during normal business hours at the Huntington Beach Library, 7111 Talbert, Huntington Beach, California.

If you would like a CD-ROM copy of the Risk Assessment, please write to Jack Fancher, Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office, 2730 Loker Avenue West, Carlsbad, California, or phone 760/431-9440, extension 215. Requests may also be submitted by electronic mail to [jack\\_fancher@fws.gov](mailto:jack_fancher@fws.gov).

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System which encompasses nearly 540 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 70 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resource offices and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

- FWS -

*For more information about the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, visit our home page at <http://fws.gov>*